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The 4th Estate Sale: How American and European Media Became an Uncritical Mouthpiece for a Designated Foreign Terror Organization



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In May 2025, the U.S. Department of State began a special aid initiative through the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) to deliver meals and direct food assistance to Palestinian civilians throughout the Gaza Strip. The mandate was straightforward: to securely move aid into a network of Secure Distribution Sites which would facilitate the distribution of millions of meals to hungry civilians¹. The effort has delivered over 60 million meals since its inception².

Within days of GHF's first meal deliveries, it became the target of a deliberate narrative assault, driven less by verifiable facts than by the demands of a competing narrative. Reports and evidence of violence at aid sites began to surface, and international and U.S. media outlets, social media influencers, and NGOs started publishing articles that ascribed blame to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) or GHF for intentional violence against civilians, war crimes, and complicity in the crime of genocide^{3,4}.

The reports quickly condensed into viral headlines, but the claim that the IDF was systematically murdering civilians was usually sourced from Hamas-run ministries or anonymous accounts, and often unverified. Moreover, evidence that Hamas could be responsible for violence around aid sites – evidence provided by non-Hamas Palestinian sources⁵, by Hamas's online communications⁶, and by video that in some cases shows Hamas operatives deliberately firing on Palestinian civilians⁷ – was almost never suggested.

A significant number of headlines from mainstream media outlets thus elevated one side of the story – the side promoted by a designated foreign terrorist organization – without waiting for forensic clarity and countervailing evidence. Although in some cases the body texts of news articles did make an effort to present a more holistic exploration of sources, the verdict or tone in the headlines – that the IDF and/or GHF was responsible for the killings at aid sites – was already given.

A core failure of media coverage is the routine elevation of the Gaza Health Ministry, a Hamas-run agency, as a trusted source on culpability for violence. While violence itself is not always in dispute, the headlines overwhelmingly frame Israel or GHF as responsible, burying in the body text that these claims originate from Hamas if this fact is revealed at all. The result is a narrative that masks its source and misleads the public about who is to blame.

The Gaza Health Ministry itself is run by Hamas and for that reason alone cannot be quoted as a politically neutral source for answering questions of culpability or fact⁸. The Ministry has a proven and systematic history of lies, deceptions, duplicated data, and exaggerations which strain credulity of any nonpartisan observer⁹ (see Section 1). Together, its record warrants extreme skepticism about any

¹ <https://ghf.org/>

² According to GHF's own records.

³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/least-24-palestinians-killed-near-gaza-aid-site-medics-say-2025-06-03/>

⁴ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/8/gaza-aid-sites-branded-human-slaughterhouses-under-deadly-israeli-fire>

⁵ https://www.memri.org/reports/palestinian-authority-daily-hamas-murdering-civilians-who-come-gaza-aid-distribution-centers#_edn3

⁶ See Appendix 2 for OSINT evidence of Hamas calling for reprisals against “collaborators” after specifically calling out “alternative bodies to UNRWA”.

⁷ <https://x.com/IsraelMFA/status/1929226251174371801>

⁸ <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/sites/default/files/pdf/PolicyNote158Epsteinv3.pdf>

⁹ <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/HJS-Questionable-Counting-%E2%80%93-Hamas-Report-web-v2.pdf>

accounts of guilt at these aid sites – and largely discredits the widespread use of the Ministry’s perspective as certifiable evidence to support stories claiming that the IDF is systematically killing civilians at aid points. Nonetheless, many mainstream media outlets remain willing to rely on figures and “facts” taken from the Gaza Health Ministry.

Unverified claims of IDF atrocities were then systematically amplified, often uncritically, by NGOs, UN agencies, and mainstream media platforms, many of which have ideological or operational reasons to oppose GHF’s independent success. In effect, U.S. humanitarian leadership was reframed as a war crime, but not because it failed or because of compelling evidence that hundreds of civilians were killed by individuals affiliated with the GHF itself. Rather, the media framed a narrative sourced unreflexively from Hamas affiliates – a narrative which aims to uproot any challenge that undermines the terrorist-designated entity’s governance over aid distribution in the Gaza Strip.

This effort transformed reporting into narrative laundering: the process of circulating unverified or unreliable information and framing it as a legitimate window into truth. The default frame – that of U.S., Israeli, and GHF culpability – is repeated in headlines both explicitly and implicitly, even when the reality is unresolved or points elsewhere. The continued dominance of this one-sided framing, built on a combination of omission, ideology, and speed rather than verification, has significance beyond journalistic malpractice. The real-world consequences are severe: it distorts public understanding of American-led aid efforts, erodes accountability, emboldens adversaries, and undermines the humanitarian legitimacy of any food relief effort which bypasses UN structures, regardless of effectiveness.

This report by the Network Contagion Research Institute (NCRI) investigates the architecture and process behind this pipeline of malicious narratives. Our results suggest that the GHF was targeted and undermined by a collection of adversarial actors and institutional amplifiers acting synchronously and convergently. Many regional and global actors stand to benefit from the degradation of the reputation of the GHF, American-led aid efforts, or the IDF’s capacity to replace them – particularly those organisations who would receive funding or authority in the event that the GHF and its partners were to withdraw from their current aid efforts. It appears as though the tradeoff in human suffering is a worthy price for institutional damage to the GHF, despite its effectiveness at delivering tens of millions of meals. And the result has been growing radicalization, including rising threats to U.S. personnel and aid workers both in the U.S. and abroad.

At its core, this is a case study in narrative distortion, one in which a U.S.-led humanitarian operation delivering a large amount of aid became the target of interests more concerned with narrative dominance than human welfare. Our analysis indicates that many media amplifiers consistently treat ongoing humanitarian crises not as conditions to resolve, but as framing tools through which to critique or delegitimize U.S. aid efforts.

BLUF: Key Findings

- **Mainstream media spread hostile, and often unverified, narratives delegitimizing U.S.-backed humanitarian aid efforts in Gaza.**

The American-led Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), financially supported by the U.S. State Department, remains a logistically successful food relief effort, having delivered over 60 million meals since late May 2025. Yet it was rapidly reframed in public discourse as a source of chaos, deception, and complicity in violence. Legacy media played a central role in legitimizing and amplifying early criticisms of the GHF, often presenting unverified or partial narratives that fueled and justified the sensationalized discourse that quickly took hold online.

- **Major media headlines cited Hamas-linked officials more than any other source – making a foreign terrorist organization one of the leading voices shaping news about GHF.**

Of the high-engagement news articles NCRI analyzed, Hamas-linked officials and organizations, such as the Gaza Health Ministry, were directly cited in headlines more than any other named source. In nearly three-quarters of those cases, it was not disclosed in the headline that the source was a Hamas affiliate. Every blame-casting headline targeted Israel or the GHF – while not a single one held Hamas responsible.

- **Unverified headlines triggered viral, conspiratorial social media posts, often amplified by foreign state media.**

Unsubstantiated headlines frequently began feeding frenzies of negative public discourse. Top viral posts, surpassing 27 million views, framed GHF as willing participants in a drug-trafficking operation. Among posts on X made between May 25 and June 11, a large language model (LLM) determined that negative narratives about GHF were nearly twice as prevalent as positive narratives, and that posts featuring these negative narratives received 116% more total engagements.

- **GHF-related media coverage undermined trust in America while shielding Hamas-linked actors by inducing bias.**

In a controlled experiment using an LLM, exposure to five randomly selected high-engagement GHF-related news articles created:

- A **70% drop** in how much Hamas was blamed (compared to the U.S.) for violence near aid sites
- A **38% drop** in support for U.S.-led aid efforts in Gaza
- A **10% drop** in trust in American sources of information about humanitarian aid

The results suggest that exposure to these high-profile news narratives reorients institutional credibility, favoring adversarial actors and eroding public trust in U.S. efforts.

- **Narrative backlash closely tracked U.S. operational success on the ground.**

Granger analysis showed that successful GHF food deliveries were predictive of subsequent spikes in largely-negative conversation about GHF. Aid activity consistently triggered outrage online, suggesting that humanitarian performance itself is treated as narrative provocation.

- **The GHF's competitors amplified Hamas-sourced claims to undermine U.S.-led aid efforts.**

Media, NGOs, and multilateral agencies promoted Hamas-sourced claims while sidelining U.S. accounts. Institutions with reputational or financial stakes in UN-run and NGO pipelines, particularly GHF's competitors, boosted unverified atrocity claims while ignoring statements from GHF or the IDF.

- **False Gaza Atrocity Narratives Trigger Left-Wing Violence and Right-Wing Amplification.**

Manufactured humanitarian claims have radicalized actors across the ideological spectrum – fueling political violence on the left and narrative amplification by deceptive right-wing networks. In an NCRI experiment ($n=1,676$), exposure to a retracted starvation headline significantly increased the warped moral perception that Israel is an evil and genocidal actor. That same retracted headline was cited in the manifesto of Elias Rodriguez, a left-wing extremist who killed two civilians in Washington, D.C. The narrative has since been co-opted and amplified by the Fake MAGA network – an ecosystem of anti-establishment influencers pushing Kremlin- and Tehran-aligned disinformation.

ASSESSMENT:

NCRI assesses that the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation was not merely the subject of criticism, but the target of a convergent narrative attack in which American and European media acted as a de facto mouthpiece for a foreign terrorist organization. This environment systematically elevated Hamas-linked claims, which were often unverified, uncontextualized, or outright false. Major headlines were repeatedly exaggerated or framed to imply atrocity, often without source transparency or sufficient evidentiary scrutiny.

While NCRI cannot confirm systematic coordination, these events appear, at the least, to reflect a structural vulnerability in the Western media ecosystem. Designated terror groups have learned to exploit public norms around journalism in order to insert hostile narratives directly into mainstream coverage, using the credibility of the press and/or the receptivity of their audience to launder their messaging. The operational effect is clear: false claims were legitimized, adversarial narratives were mainstreamed, and U.S.-led humanitarian operations were consistently reframed as a war crime.

Beyond reputational damage, this media-enabled narrative warfare has strategic consequences. It undermines American credibility abroad, erodes trust in humanitarian leadership, and ultimately jeopardizes global food security by deterring future aid interventions. What this report reveals is not a media failure. It is the sale of the Fourth Estate, where prestige press institutions now serve as delivery systems for the messaging of hostile foreign actors.

Section 1: Malicious Narrative Escalation: Volume, Velocity, and Sentiment

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) was founded in February 2025, and began to be a subject of public debate by early May 2025. Even before GHF aid distribution began on May 27, highly critical narratives began being seeded throughout the media ecosystem. For instance, one post¹⁰ from May 7 that received nearly 200K views (Figure 1) neatly encapsulates many of the major criticisms lodged at the GHF through the media, even in the absence of any empirical evidence in support of these claims.



Figure 1: X post by Craig Mokhiber (May 07 2025)

While some voices articulated harsh but reasoned criticism of the GHF aid model, many others capitalized on the virality of the GHF to spread blatantly unrealistic, harmful, and unverified propaganda about the supposed intents of the nonprofit. These reports only intensified after aid distribution commenced, spanning both news outlets and social media posts and leading to several significant factual revisions and retractions from legacy media organizations that purportedly abide by high journalistic standards.

¹⁰ <https://x.com/CraigMokhiber/status/1920147347511623834>

The Washington Post retracted early versions¹¹ of a report that explicitly stated Israeli troops killed over 30 Palestinians near a U.S. aid site in Gaza (Figure 2a). The original headline attributed to “health officials” the claims about Israeli troops being responsible for the deaths, but the journalists failed to clarify that this attribution solely reflected a claim from the Gaza Health Ministry. This consequently gave readers a false impression that Israeli responsibility had been independently confirmed. While Israeli military statements denying the reported casualties appeared in all versions, the article gave those claims disproportionately lower weight than the figures from the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry. During early investigations susceptible to “fog-of-war” conditions, the article conveyed unwarranted certainty about Israeli culpability in a disputed event before fact-finding was complete, instead relying on claims from groups affiliated with a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization. The Washington Post retracted¹² the headline stating that Israeli troops killed over 30 people near the aid site, updated the article to reflect that responsibility for the incident remained contested¹³, and released a statement on X that it should not have been published in that form.

Reuters retracted a central claim in its original reporting that a controversial proposal detailing plans to construct camps in and around Gaza originated from a U.S.-backed aid organization¹⁴ (Figure 2b). This attribution was presented without sufficient evidence, based solely on similarities in the organizations’ names and acronyms (the U.S.-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation was cited as the author, despite the document originating from the “Global Humanitarian Foundation”). Reuters acknowledged that the document could not be definitively linked to the U.S.-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation in terms of authorship or submission¹⁵. This is a significant reversal, as initial reporting publicized direct organizational involvement in a politically explosive plan that was decried as “concentration camps”.

CNN corrected its report of a shooting near a Gaza aid site in which at least 31 Palestinians were allegedly killed¹⁶ (Figure 2c). The original article uncritically reported the Gaza Health Ministry’s claim that the Israeli military was responsible¹⁷, without making clear that this accusation had not been independently verified¹⁸. Further, the report was published without obtaining a statement from the Israeli military, showing bias in the initial reporting.

MSNBC reported that approximately 60 Palestinians were fatally shot while waiting for humanitarian aid at a GHF aid site, which was then used as a segue into a video news segment about GHF and its alleged controversies¹⁹ (Figure 2c). Though they later issued an on-air correction²⁰ and a written disclaimer on their webpage that the attack was confirmed to have occurred at a UN aid distribution site (rather than a GHF site), the video clip at the present remains up on the MSNBC website otherwise uncorrected.

¹¹ <https://archive.is/txzEr>

¹² <https://x.com/washingtonpost/status/1929961283593367559>

¹³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/06/01/israel-gaza-aid-rafah-shooting/>

¹⁴ <https://x.com/reuters/status/1942280250546597945>

¹⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-backed-aid-group-proposed-human-transit-areas-palestinians-gaza-2025-07-07/>

¹⁶ <https://www.cnn.com/2025/06/01/middleeast/palestinians-killed-gaza-aid-center-intl-hnk>

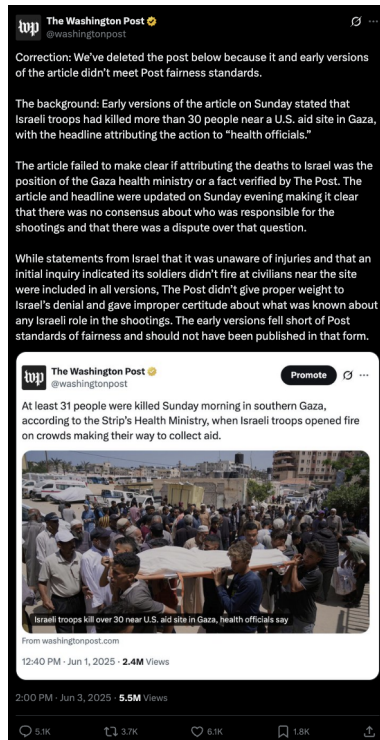
¹⁷ <https://x.com/CNN/status/1929072096358891694>

¹⁸ <https://x.com/CNN/status/1929225592144023881>

¹⁹ <https://www.msnbc.com/morning-joe/watch/controversial-gaza-aid-sites-under-increased-scrutiny-241918021986>

²⁰ <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DLINQazRL4N/>

a.

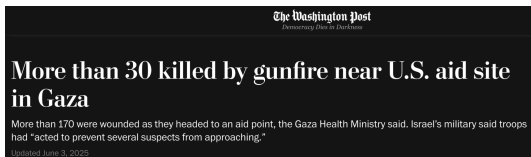


Middle East conflict Gaza Humanitarian Foundation Gaza food crisis Remaining hostages Trump's Gaza proposal

Israeli troops kill over 30 near U.S. aid site in Gaza, health officials say

Over 170 others were wounded on the way to a Gaza Humanitarian Foundation distribution point in Rafah in the deadliest incident tied to a new U.S.-backed aid mechanism.

20 minutes ago



b.



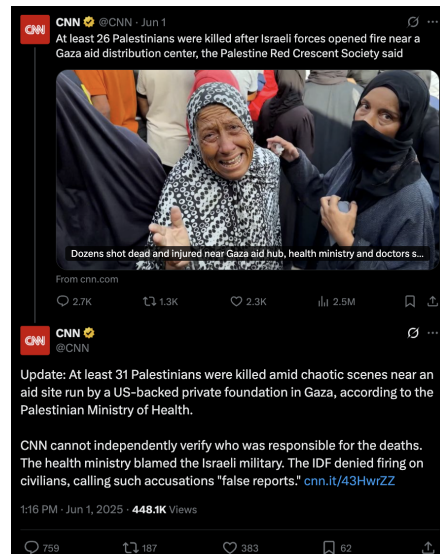
Exclusive: US-backed aid group proposed 'Human Transit Areas' for Palestinians in Gaza

By Jonathan Landay and Aram Roston
July 7, 2025 12:21 PM UTC · Updated ago

Exclusive: Proposal outlines large-scale 'Humanitarian Transit Areas' for Palestinians in Gaza

By Jonathan Landay and Aram Roston
July 7, 2025 12:29 PM EDT · Updated July 7, 2025

c.



d.



Figure 2: News articles that had at least one major claim retracted or corrected by the authors. **(a)** *Washington Post*: correction notice on X (top), retracted headline (middle), corrected headline (bottom), **(b)** *Reuters*: correction notice on X (top), retracted headline (middle), corrected headline (bottom), **(c)** *CNN*: original post and follow-up post with correction notice on X, **(d)** *MSNBC*: correction note on video segment.

These retracted claims often gained substantial traction on social media before being corrected. The Washington Post tweet introducing the original report received over 2.4M views on X before it was deleted for failing to meet journalistic standards (Figure 2a), while the initial CNN tweet received more than five times as many views as the follow-up tweet correcting its claims (2.5M views to 448K views; Figure 2c). Retracted claims, even after their correction, frequently fuel social media conspiracies, such as that GHF plans to put Palestinians into “concentration camps”²¹ while citing the retracted Reuters article (same article as Figure 2b).

Exposure to these sensationalized narratives – delivered with the veneer of credibility offered by legacy media organizations – primes users to be more accepting of other dubious claims about GHF, even from unverified sources. A particularly salient example of this occurred when Gazan pharmacist Omar Hamad introduced the conspiratorial narrative that the GHF intentionally laced bags of flour with the narcotic Oxycodone. This claim went viral on X, racking up over 25.7M views across just 21 posts. Additional claims soon began circulating about the methods GHF allegedly used to contaminate the aid, such as replacing sugar with sand.

Below (Figure 3) are sample posts exemplifying themes which best reflect the distortions fomented by malicious narratives. These examples reflect the existence of widespread conspiratorial claims that the U.S. aid was contaminated with opioids. The speed at which these stories spread is a reflection of how powerful these narratives are, and they show how easy it is to delegitimize the GHF with unsubstantiated claims. Their lack of third-party verification, and their explicit implausibility even assuming a malicious intention by Israel, make the claims that Israel is sending a tightly-regulated narcotic into Gaza as part of a genocidal campaign highly dubious. Although no report has so far publicly *disproven* these claims, an independent investigation by FRANCE 24 English reported that these unverified rumors originated from the Hamas-run Gaza Media Office and circulated widely on social media prior to being uncritically amplified by major media labels²² before official investigations were conducted.

²¹ <https://x.com/SuppressedNews/status/1942225976852713694>

²² <https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/truth-or-fake/20250702-gaza-oxycodone-found-in-flour-bags-distributed-by-us-israeli-aid-centres>



The most despicable form of genocide has recently come to light with the spread of a drug called Oxycodone among the population. Israel has reportedly been smuggling it in through bags of flour provided as aid.

As a pharmacist, let me explain what this drug is: it belongs to the opioid family and is used to relieve severe pain when regular painkillers fail—especially for cancer patients.

But the problem with this drug is that it acts on specific receptors in the nervous system, causing severe addiction, a decrease in heart rate, impaired awareness and consciousness, and dangerous respiratory depression.

Its side effects are numerous and can transform a person into something unrecognizable—a shell of who they were.

It has also been revealed that the drug is not only hidden inside flour bags, but the flour itself appears to be mixed with it.

Our battle with them is not only a battle of weapons, but also a battle of awareness and consciousness. They are masters at numbing our minds, distorting our perception, and using every means possible to erase our collective awareness and turn us against one another.

10:58 AM · Jun 26, 2025 · 2.1M Views

722 10K 15K 2.5K



Drugs found in flour sent to Gaza.



5:02 PM · Jun 27, 2025 · 8.4M Views

645 16K 41K 1.5K



Gaza's Government Media Office has expressed its "deep concern and condemnation" over the discovery of "narcotic pills of the type 'Oxycodone'" inside flour bags distributed by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation in the besieged enclave.

LIVE updates: aje.io/hvyssr



11:50 AM · Jun 27, 2025 · 1M Views

150 2.3K 3.6K 328

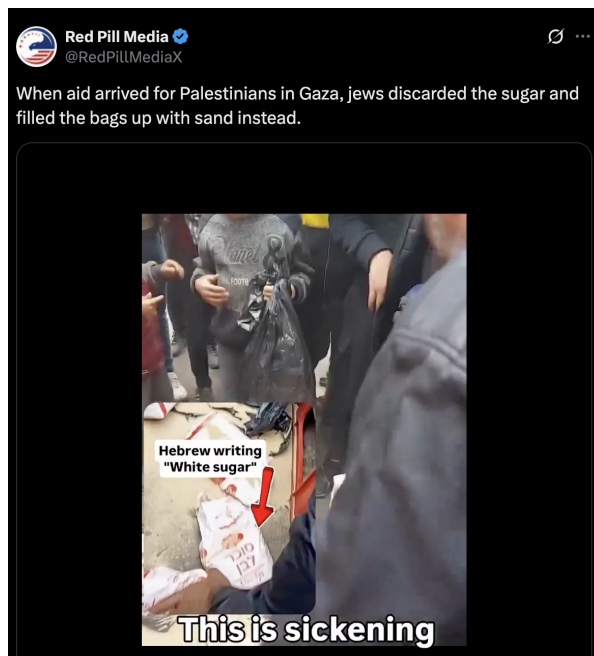


Figure 3: Examples of viral conspiracy theories that the U.S. is intentionally contaminating humanitarian aid. Top left: a purported pharmacist in Gaza introduces a claim that Israel is filling flour aid bags from the GHF with drugs (Oxycodone or opioids) as a weapon of war. Top right: claim amplification via Al Jazeera. Bottom left: a repost of the claim receives 8.4M views. Bottom right: a novel conspiracy theory from a known Pakistani propaganda account which portrays itself as a right-wing U.S. nationalist – that Israel (here, “jews” [sic]) are putting sand into bags of sugar – spreads across social media.

Fake MAGA and Foreign Inauthentic Networks use Atrocity Narratives to Provoke Violent Domestic Hostility

Analysis of open source collections on X indicates that beyond NGOs, UN agencies, human rights groups, Hamas affiliates, and mainstream media, the Fake MAGA network²³ also appears to have begun amplifying anti-GHF and Gaza starvation conspiracies. NCRI's previous research shows that despite branding themselves as "America First", this group routinely echoes Kremlin and Iranian talking points, including anti-Trump pedophiliac conspiracies and pro-authoritarian propaganda. Their content is often amplified by bot networks and coordinated engagement farms, allowing fringe narratives to gain disproportionate reach. Having exposed them previously, we found these actors weaponized the same humanitarian falsehoods to radicalize their audience.

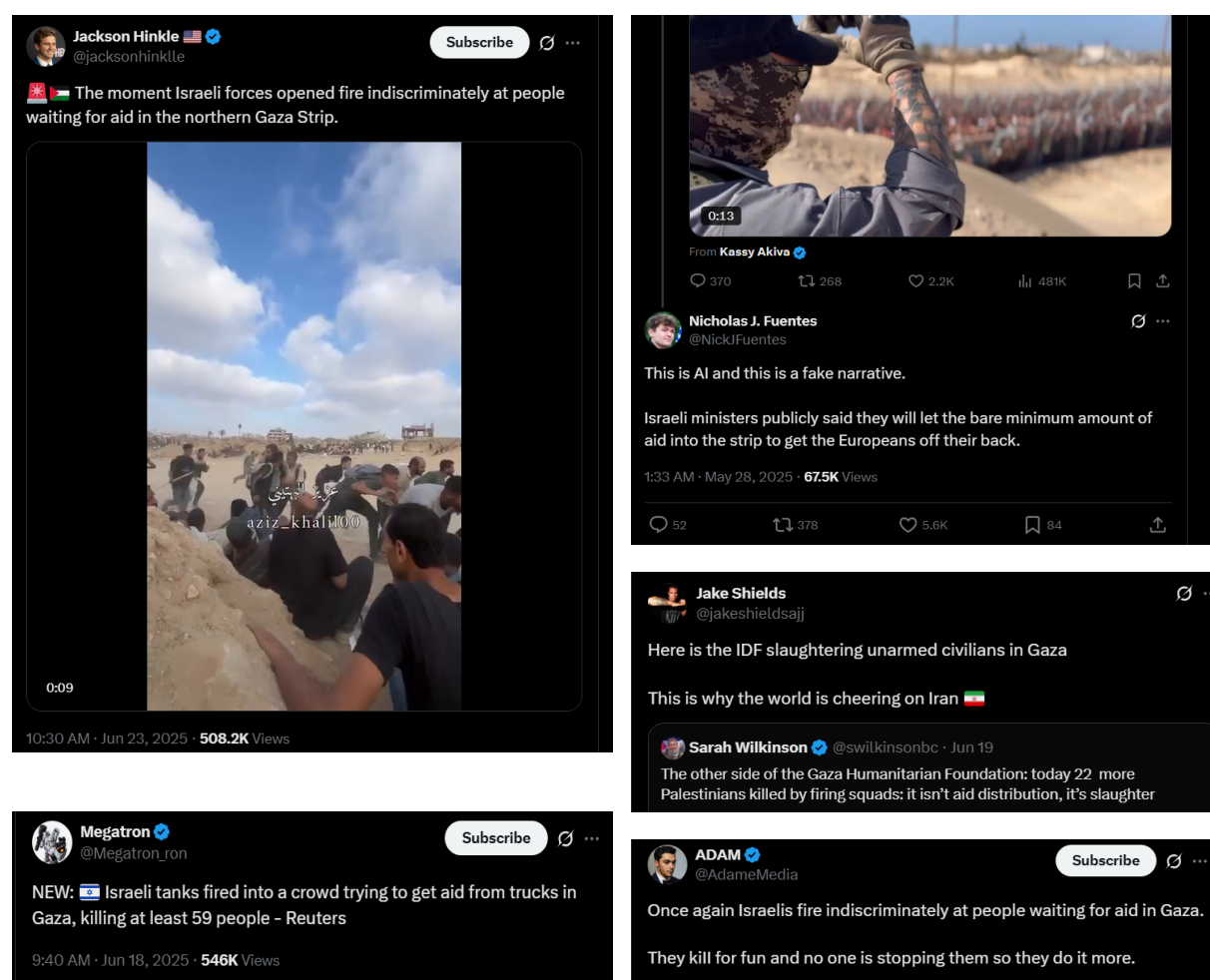


Figure 4: OSINT evidence of "Fake MAGA" amplification

False humanitarian claims serve as high-yield narrative payloads, first introduced by institutions and later amplified by ideologically fluid actors operating across the fringes. While originating from traditional sources (NGOs, UN bodies, humanitarian advocates), these narratives are rapidly absorbed by future

²³ <https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/False-Flags-and-Fake-MAGA.pdf>

assassins like Elias Rodriguez²⁴ or online networks that reframe them through radically different lenses on both the right and left. They are often extreme, conspiratorial, or authoritarian in tone.

What emerges is a shared reservoir of outrage, where actors on both the far left and the extreme right co-opt identical narratives to support divergent, yet equally destabilizing, agendas. While the framing differs, the underlying mechanism is consistent: both sides adopt the moral prism of grievance, victimhood, and righteous urgency often associated with “wokeness.” On the left, this manifests through appeals to systemic oppression and colonial framing; on the right, the same language is repurposed to cast a popular nationalist identity as persecuted and embattled.

This cross-contamination of ideological posture, comprising human rights language repurposed by pro-Kremlin influencers and populist rhetoric echoing UN-aligned narratives, represents a meaningful shift from the past. The result is not merely polarization, but the erosion of any stable narrative center, replaced by recirculating grievance systems that legitimize retaliatory postures across the spectrum.

Analysis of X Posts

In order to assess the volume and tone of online chatter around GHF, and changes in such conversations over time, NCRI analyzed a sample of 28,320 posts on X made between May 1 and June 11, 2025 that used the phrase “Gaza Humanitarian Foundation” or its acronym “GHF”. The volume of these posts over time is depicted in Figure 5 below. We refer to these posts as “GHF posts.”

Daily GHF post volume began to increase dramatically after May 25 (the date Jake Wood resigned as GHF executive director), and particularly so after May 27, when GHF food distribution began in Gaza. Between May 1 and May 26, there were an average of 146 GHF posts per day; after May 27, there were an average of 1,532 per day, representing a 946% increase in daily post volume in our sample.

²⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/live/cy9vr10n732t>

To move beyond sample counts and uncover the valence of the content surge, we applied Large Language Model (LLM) analysis to the scraped dataset. The LLM was tasked with classifying social media posts related to the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) into categories of positive, neutral, or negative sentiment.²⁵

The results were clear: posts expressing negative sentiment towards GHF dominated the discourse. Nearly twice as many posts (49.4%) expressed negative sentiment towards GHF as expressed positive sentiment towards GHF (25.0%). These negative posts generated between 60% and 80% of total engagements (likes + comments + reposts) nearly every day between May 25 and June 11; see Figure 6a. This negative framing of GHF often included accusations of Israeli violence, characterizations of GHF as engaged in dehumanization, and emotionally charged claims of mass civilian harm.

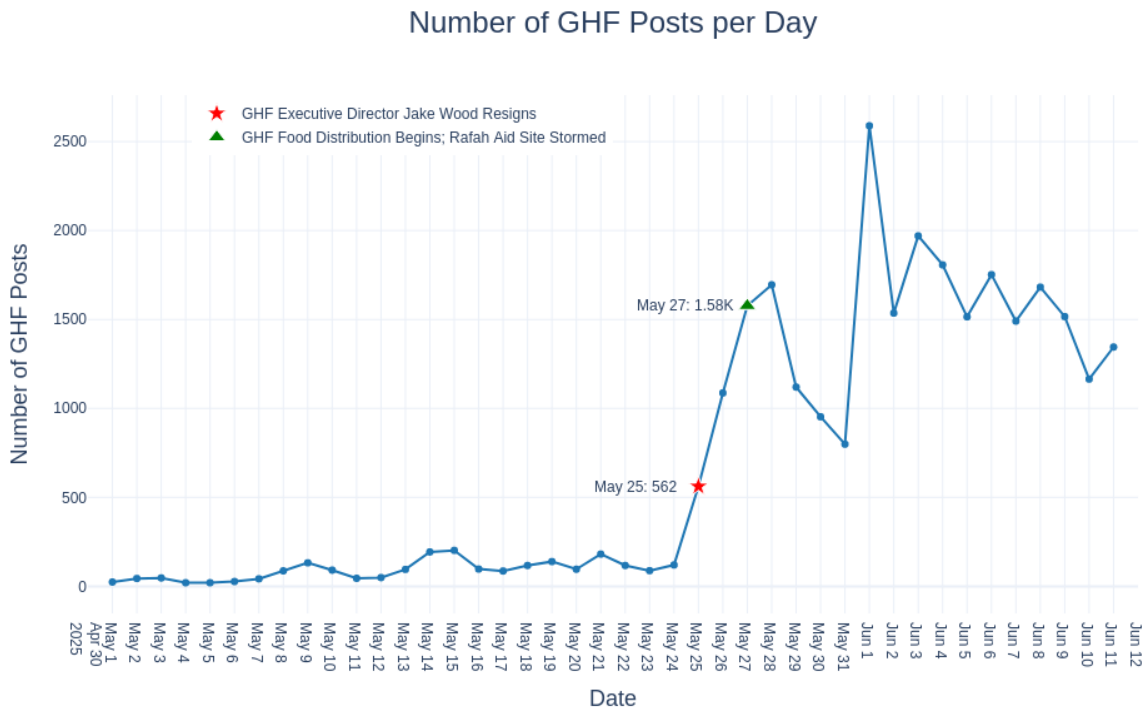
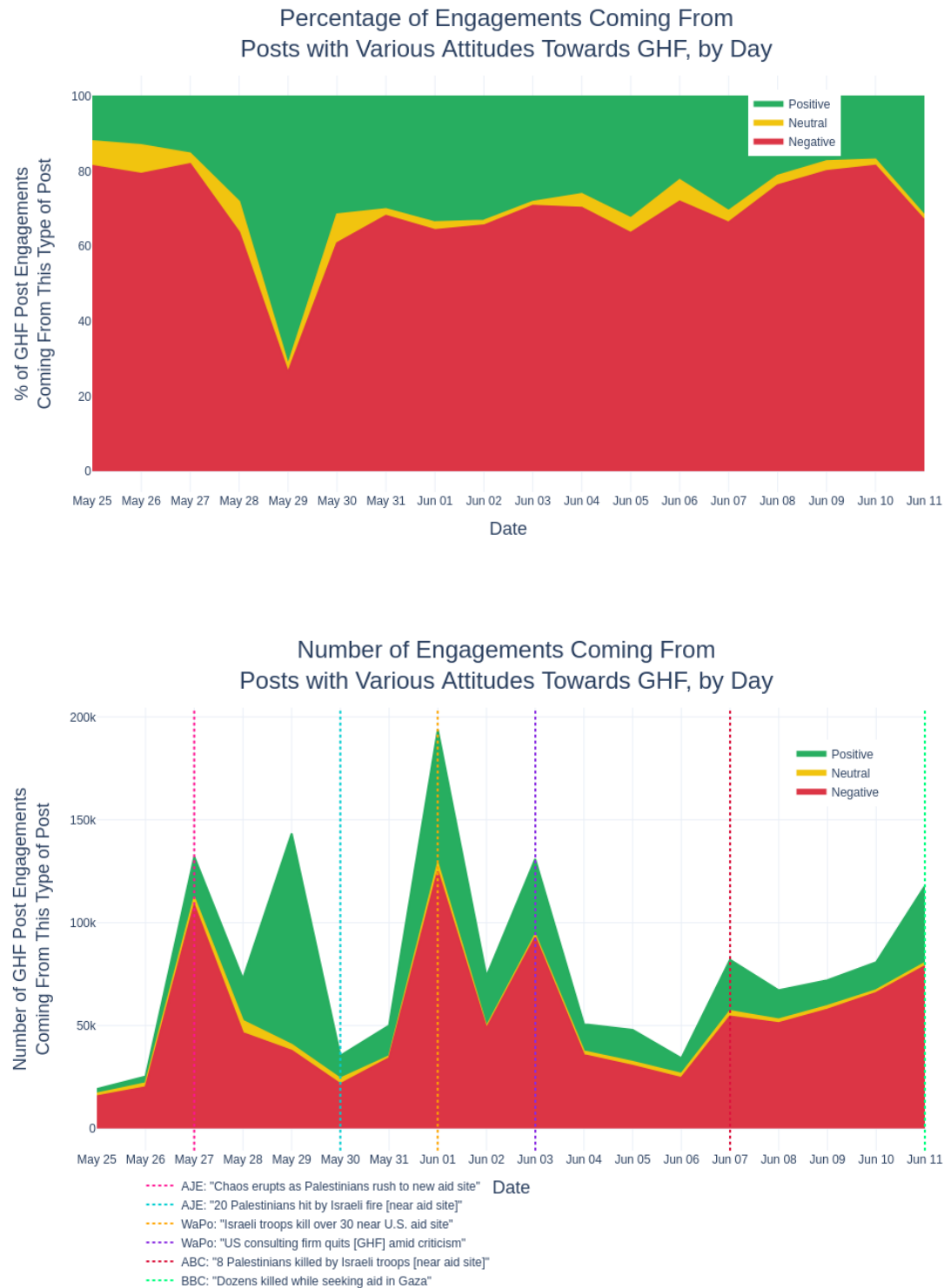


Figure 5: The number of X Posts with the phrase “Gaza Humanitarian Foundation” or “GHF” increased after May 25.

²⁵ In order to ensure that the LLM’s classifications were based on specific sentiment towards GHF rather than general language sentiment, we first had the LLM classify each post into one of six possible narrative categories, each of which corresponds to a negative or positive narrative about GHF that was frequently found among the posts dataset. Posts that were not classified into any of these six narrative categories were then labeled as “Neutral”, while posts classified into narratives like “The GHF is a failure” were labeled as “Negative” and those classified into narratives like “The GHF is a success” were labeled as “Positive”.



Figures 6a (top) and 6b (bottom)

Figure 6: Engagements coming from posts with positive, negative, and neutral sentiment towards GHF. **(a)** Expressed as a proportion of all engagements with GHF posts. **(b)** Expressed in raw numbers, with key news headlines at various points in time. As can be seen in either chart, the lion's share of engagements come from anti-GHF posts.

To analyze attitudes towards GHF during the periods of greatest chatter, we constructed Figure 6b, which shows the day-over-day volume of engagements coming from posts with positive, negative, and neutral attitudes towards GHF. The graph revealed a set of distinct peaks rather than a steady accumulation of discourse. Further review showed that volume spikes in negative chatter coincided with the release of high-profile media headlines typically alleging mass casualties linked to the IDF/GHF at aid sites, most notably on May 27, June 1, and June 7. Figure 6b shows a selection of such headlines whose publication preceded or coincided with spikes in negative engagement.

Qualitative analysis of open-source collections and review of high-engagement media stories from May 25 to June 11, 2025 together showed a consistent amplification pattern consisting of the same actors. Figure 7 maps these relationships, showing how a concentrated group of outlets repeatedly cited the same Hamas-run entities or anonymous sources, appearing to act as activation points for downstream narrative amplification.

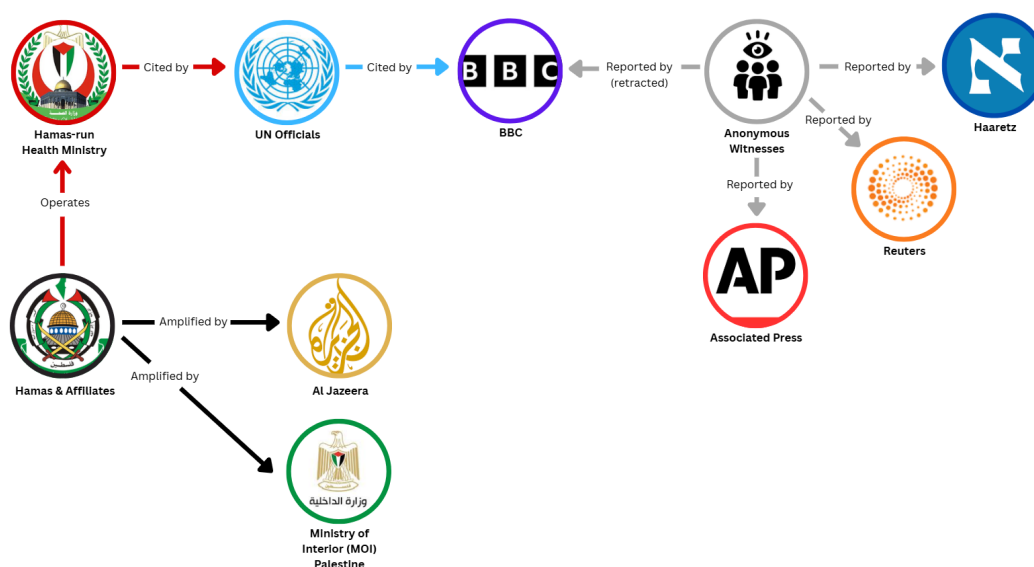


Figure 7: Media amplification network for anti-GHF narratives: This network shows examples of several of the media outlets most frequently cited, reposted, or referenced in posts about GHF. The structure reveals a tightly interconnected core of media institutions. These include Western outlets, regional broadcasters, and state-influenced platforms, all of which function as central arteries for narrative diffusion.

While this pattern strongly suggests that headlines serve as consistent narrative triggers, it is important to note that the relationship between news headlines and amplification rarely follows in a linear or mechanistic fashion. Subsequent amplification here appears to take shape through a tangle of overlapping narratives, many of which are carried by actors such as NGOs, influencers, and international organizations. These groups do not merely respond; they often inject new content, frame it through their own ideological lenses, and escalate or sustain the cycle for strategic or commercial ends.

SECTION 2: Credibility Collapse: Did Trusted Institutions Become Narrative Accelerators for Foreign Terror Organizations?

Analysis of Media Articles: Topics, Sources, and Attribution of Blame

To assess the quality and sourcing of media coverage contributing to the hostile narrative environment surrounding GHF, we conducted a review of high-engagement headlines. This included stories from both identified spike periods and the broader timeframe in which false atrocity claims gained traction online. NCRI developed a consistent and transparent approach to article selection: We applied a Boolean search string to capture relevant discussion about humanitarian aid in Gaza²⁶ and applied the query to social media posts on X made between May 27 and July 1, 2025. Our goal was to evaluate the factual basis, sourcing integrity, and reporting practices behind the narratives driving public discourse.

To ensure coverage was fairly and consistently represented, we collected posts from a curated set of major international and domestic news outlet handles.²⁷ For each handle, we identified the top five distinct articles²⁸ based on total cumulative viewership (“engagement”) across all posts linking to that article that were made between May 27 and July 1. Some handles linked to fewer than 5 distinct articles during this period, or to none at all; thus we ended up with 52 total distinct articles. This approach allowed us to focus on the highest-impact narratives, rather than selecting stories manually or by editorial judgment, and enabled a comparative analysis of source usage, attribution practices, and headline framing across influential media accounts.

Each article’s headline and body text were blind-coded by two independent reviewers using a structured rubric (see Appendix 1b) focused on source attribution, narrative framing, and critical tone. Reviewers assessed whether the headline’s main claim was attributed to the Gaza Health Ministry, the IDF, anonymous sources, or left unattributed. They also assessed whether the headline attributed blame towards the GHF/Israel, Hamas/Palestinians, or neither. The article body was then analyzed for the same source attribution markers and evaluated for critical tone toward Israeli or U.S. actors. Finally, reviewers recorded whether the Gaza Health Ministry was cited without clarifying its affiliation with Hamas. This approach allowed us to quantify patterns in sourcing, narrative posture, and the use of problematic or uncontextualized sources. Inter-rater agreement exceeded 70 percent, with disagreements resolved through a third reviewer. Access to the full table of results is available upon request.

Though social media platforms serve a major ecosystem for modern news dissemination, recent work found approximately 75% of individuals do not click and read the links before sharing, suggesting most

²⁶ "Gaza Humanitarian Foundation" OR ghf OR (gaza AND ("aid distribution" OR "aid site" OR "distribution point" OR "distribution center" OR "distribution centre" OR "aid center" OR "aid centre" OR "food center" OR "food centre" OR "aid effort" OR "aid system" OR "aid hub" OR "aid seekers"))

²⁷ We collected all such posts made by 20 handles: @nytimes, @nytimesworld, @washingtonpost, @BBCNews, @BBCBreaking, @BBCWorld, @SkyNews, @SkyNewsBreak, @CNN, @cnnbrk, @cnni, @FoxNews, @foxnews, @foxnews, @CBSNews, @ABC, @AP, @Reuters, @Channel4News, @haaretzcom, and @WSJ. Among these posts, five of these handles either did not link to any articles (@FoxNews and @foxnews) or linked only to articles already found among the top 5 most-viewed articles from another related handle (@SkyNewsBreak only linked to articles also shared by @SkyNews, and, @cnnbrk and @cnni only linked to articles also shared by @CNN).

²⁸ Within each handle, we aggregated views across all posts that linked to the same article URL, then ranked the article URLs according to this total viewership. We began by selecting the top 5 URLs for each handle; some of these handles had linked to fewer than 5 distinct articles during the period in question. We then manually examined these “top 5” lists to remove any duplicate articles, even if they were published under different URLs or by a different, related news handle. Whenever a duplicate article was detected in some outlet’s “top 5”, we used the URL rankings to replace the duplicate with the next-highest-ranked distinct article by the same handle (if there were any remaining articles for that handle).

users simply do not read past the headline²⁹. As such, we first restricted analyses to just the headlines, then repeated analyses for the whole article (headline and full body text).

Headlines alone. We analyzed 52 high-engagement news headlines publicized on X by major media between May 27 and July 1. Half of the sampled headlines attributed blame to the GHF or Israel; half avoided assigning blame altogether; and none attributed blame to Hamas or Palestinians. Key factual claims were sourced to Hamas-linked officials in over a quarter of all sampled headlines (28.8%, 15/52 headlines). Of the articles whose headlines directly cited Hamas or its subsidiaries, the majority (73.3%, 11/15 headlines) failed to identify the source's affiliation with Hamas, leaving readers with the impression that these were neutral, non-partisan sources. As shown in Figure 9, the dominant narrative actors in headlines are anonymous sources and Hamas-aligned officials, while Israeli and GHF perspectives are minimized or excluded.

Full article. We then extended our analyses to the full text of all 52 high-engagement articles published by major news outlets between May 27 and July 1. Sourcing practices throughout the body text were, like in the headlines, also problematic: of the 44 articles citing the Gaza Health Ministry or Hamas-affiliated “officials”, only 26 (59%) acknowledged their affiliation with Hamas, while 18 (41%) referenced these officials without disclosing their affiliation with a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization. Coverage emphasized claims of Israeli culpability, civilian casualties, and operational chaos at GHF sites, with limited attention to context, verification, or alternative explanations – see Figure 2a,c in Section 1.

Type of Incident Reported in Headline

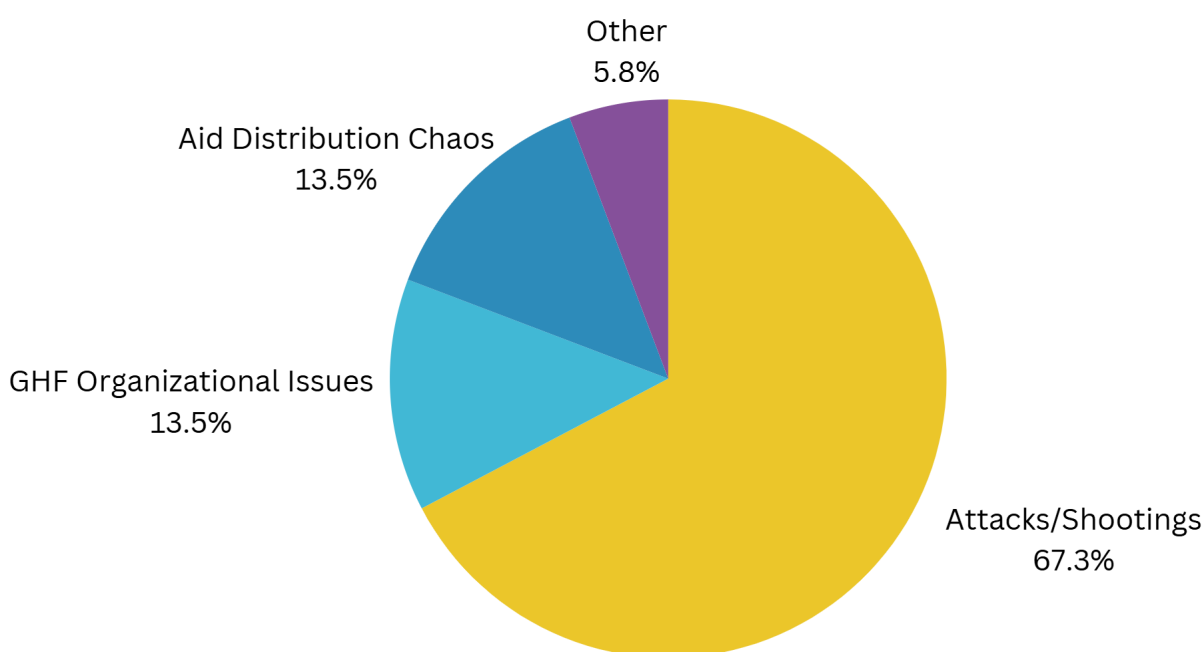
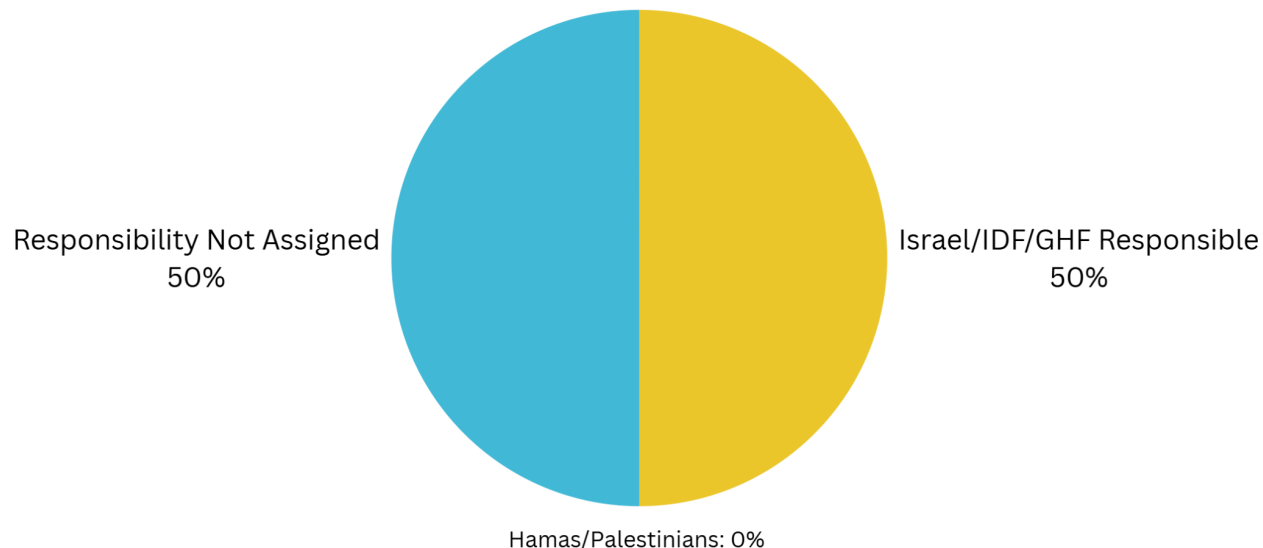


Figure 8: The majority of articles’ headlines focus on violence surrounding GHF aid sites. This chart categorizes the primary subject matter of the headlines of 52 high-engagement articles related to GHF. Most focused on attacks or shootings (67%), 14% addressed chaos around aid sites without necessarily citing attacks or shootings, and ~14% addressed organizational issues with the GHF, such as lack of transparency or controversies over funding, motives or efficacy.

²⁹ Sundar, S.S., Snyder, E.C., Liao, M. *et al.* Sharing without clicking on news in social media. *Nat Hum Behav* 9, 156–168 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-024-02067-4>

Attribution of Blame in Headline



Source in Headline

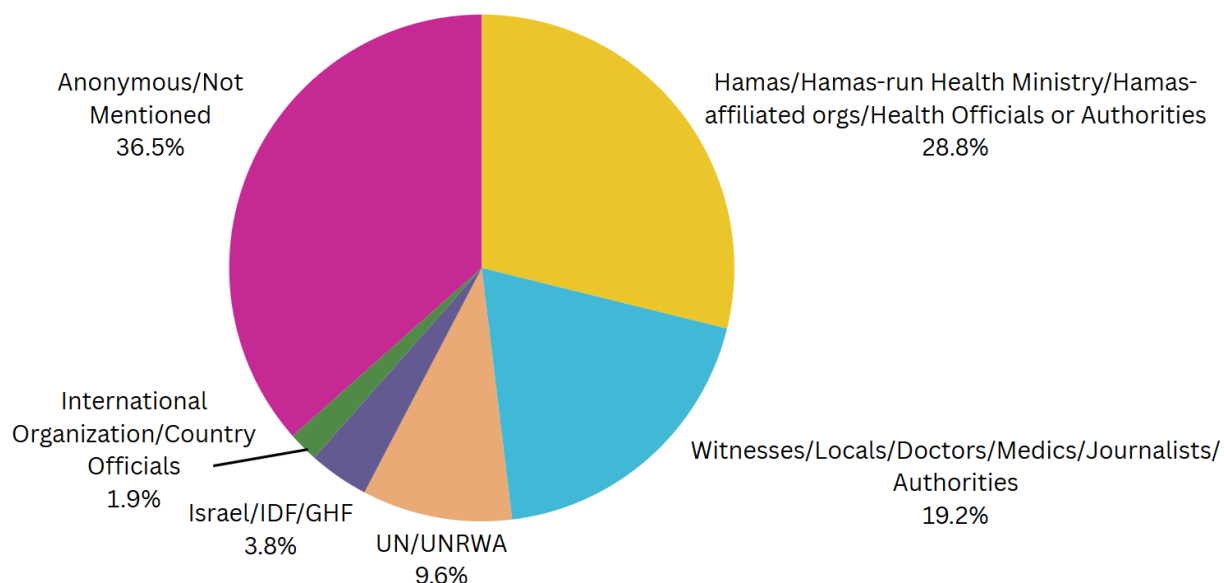


Figure 9: (top) In all headlines, Israel or the GHF are blamed or blame is obscured; no headlines blame Hamas or Palestinians. This chart shows blame attribution across the headlines of 52 high-engagement articles. **(bottom)** Headline claims are overwhelmingly sourced to anonymous or Hamas-linked actors, while Israeli or GHF sources appear rarely. This chart breaks down the sources cited in the 52 headlines. Among the 15 headlines citing Hamas-linked officials, 11 do not disclose that affiliation, presenting partisan sources as neutral or authoritative.

LLM-Based Content Bias Assessment of News Articles

To evaluate potential bias in media reporting on the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), we applied large language model (LLM) analysis to a structured set of interpretive questions³⁰. LLMs not trained on current events offer a powerful tool for assessing framing, tone, and sourcing across articles when provided with contextual inputs. Their ability to apply generalized knowledge and linguistic reasoning across diverse texts enables a consistent, replicable assessment of how events are being characterized and attributed. This approach complements human review by testing whether exposure to article content meaningfully shifts interpretation compared to baseline knowledge, particularly among individuals who may not be otherwise informed about the relevant events.

We ran two experimental conditions using OpenAI's o4-mini model. In the first ($n=988$)³¹, the model was prompted to answer 11 standardized questions related to narrative attribution, tone, and sourcing based solely on its general knowledge, without access to the specific articles. In the second condition ($n=996$), the model was given a randomly selected sample (varying each time) of 5 out of the 52 full articles identified above – each including the headline³², outlet name, and body text. After reviewing this content, it was asked to answer the same 11 questions, drawing on both its baseline knowledge and the context provided by the articles. This design allowed us to test whether exposure to news coverage led to systematic differences in how the LLM interpreted responsibility, bias, or narrative framing.³³

To test whether media coverage shifts perceived responsibility for the Gaza crisis, we asked the LLM to answer blame attribution questions with and without reading a random sample of five news articles. Exposure to coverage significantly increased the LLM's assessment of how irresponsibly Israeli and American actors have handled the humanitarian situation in Gaza and also significantly decreased how irresponsibly it thought Hamas had behaved; see Figure 10.

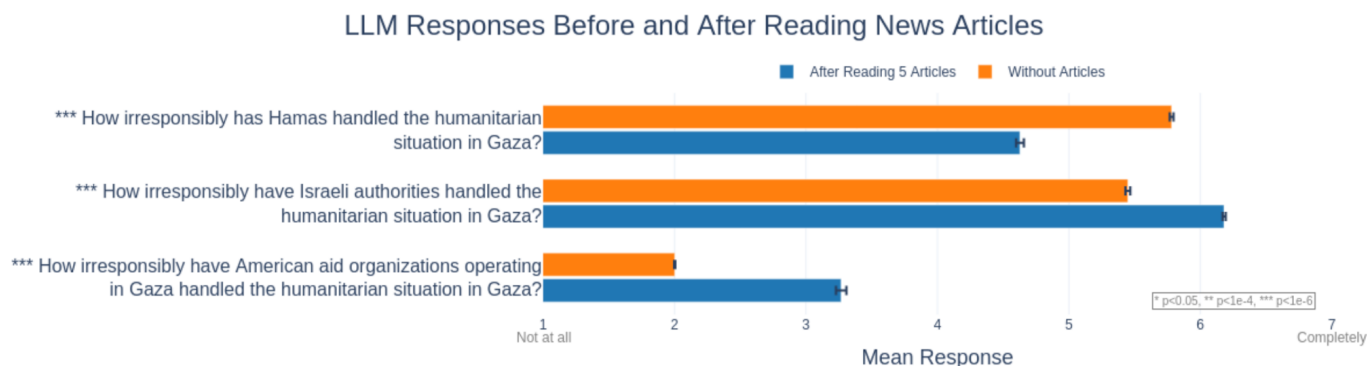


Figure 10: Exposure to media coverage reduces blame on Hamas and shifts it toward the U.S. and Israel. This figure shows mean LLM responses (1–7 scale) to questions assessing the irresponsibility of Hamas, Israeli authorities, and American humanitarian actors in Gaza, before and after reading five randomly selected news articles. Significance levels: $p < 10^{-6}$ in all cases.

³⁰ We used OpenAI's o4-mini model, which is a state-of-the-art reasoning LLM with a comparatively recent knowledge cutoff of May 31, 2024. This means the model can somewhat accurately play the role of a person who is aware of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza but is not informed about recent American aid efforts other than through reading recent articles about them.

³¹ Sample sizes are slightly less than 1,000 since a small number of the LLM's responses were rejected due to being improperly formatted.

³² For one of these 52 articles, an updated title of "Four killed by gunfire near Gaza aid centre, local health workers say" was mistakenly given to the LLM instead of the original title of "Gaza health workers say four killed by Israeli gunfire near aid centre". However, that BBC article's entire original body text was correctly given to the LLM, so this mistaken use of the slightly milder, updated title almost certainly did not significantly impact the results.

³³ See Appendix 3 for the full LLM prompts used in both treatments.

We next evaluated whether media exposure affects support for U.S. humanitarian engagement and trust in key actors. After reading five randomly selected news stories, the LLM's support for U.S.-led aid efforts declined by 38% on a scale of 1-7; see Figure 11. Similarly, it significantly downgraded its trust in U.S. and Israeli sources, while also decreasing its trust of the Gaza Health Ministry by a smaller amount. The articles appear to systematically damage the credibility of Western-aligned actors while leaving Hamas-linked sources largely intact.

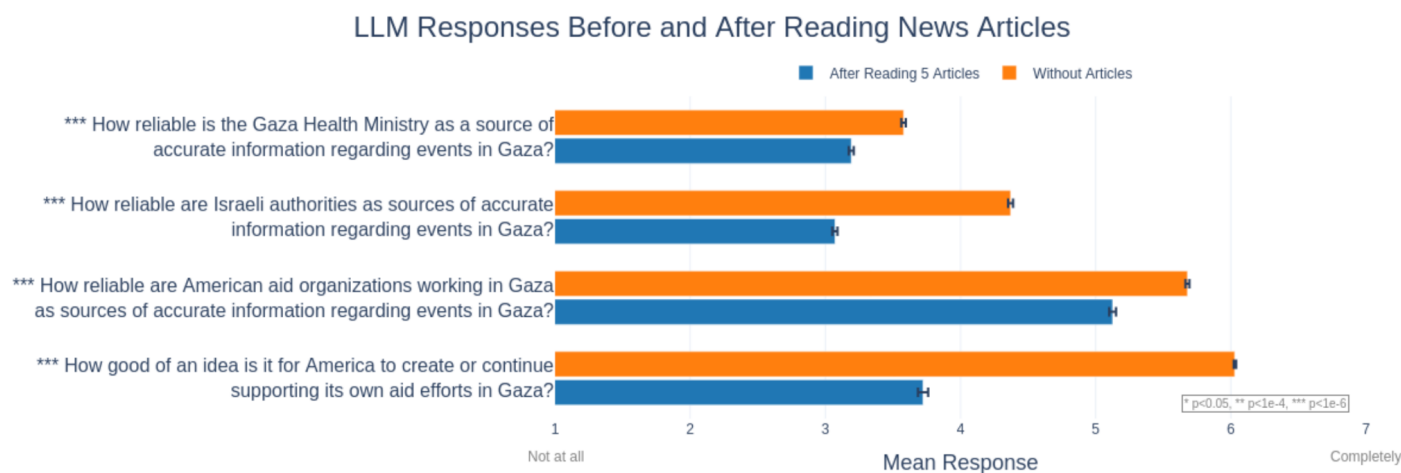


Figure 11: Exposure to media coverage reduces trust in U.S. aid and Israeli sources, slightly reduces trust in the Gaza Health Ministry, and greatly reduces support for American aid efforts in Gaza. This figure shows mean LLM responses (1–7 scale) evaluating the perceived reliability of different actors and support for U.S. aid in Gaza, before and after reading five news articles. Significance levels: $p < 10^{-6}$ in all cases.

Finally, we evaluated the LLM's comparative assessment of responsibility for failures of aid distribution and violence around aid sites, both before and after exposure. On a scale of 1 to 7 assessing blame for violence around aid sites, after exposure to the articles the LLM shifted from almost completely blaming Hamas (6.12) to almost completely blaming American aid organizations (1.17) - a 70% reduction in blame for Hamas. See Figure 12. Similarly, blame for failures of aid distribution shifted from Hamas (5.91) to America (2.97) - a 50% reduction in blame for Hamas. Exposure to the articles created similar strong shifts in blame from Hamas to Israel. These findings suggest that current media coverage erodes the credibility of the U.S. and allied institutions while shielding or normalizing Hamas-aligned entities.

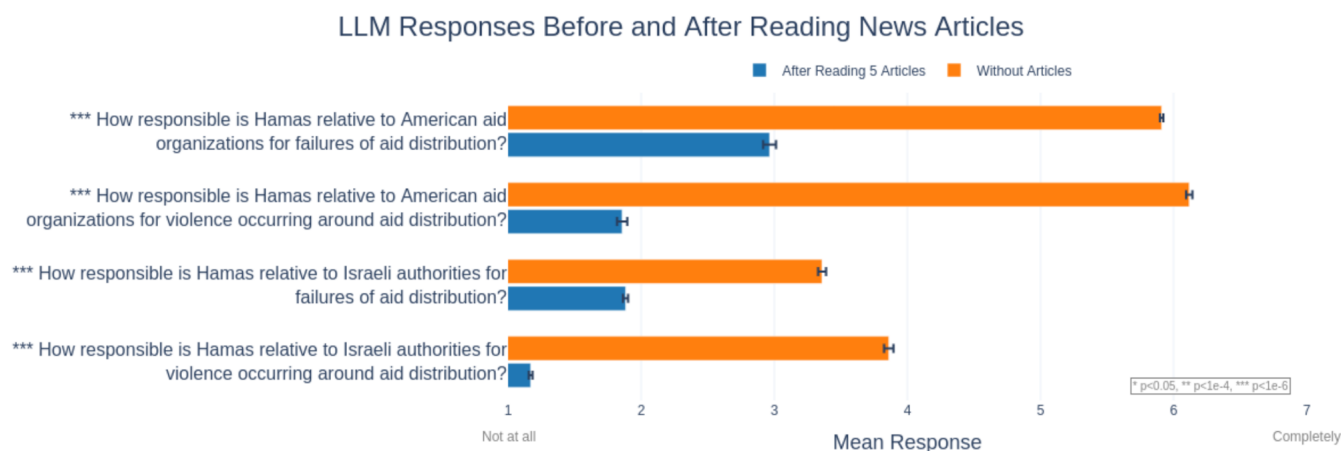


Figure 12: Exposure to media dramatically shifts assessment of responsibility for violence around aid sites and failures of aid distribution away from Hamas and towards US aid organizations and Israeli authorities. This figure shows average LLM responses (1–7 scale) before and after reading five news articles. Significance levels: $p < 10^{-6}$ in all cases.

Credibility of Hamas-Linked Authorities

From where might these articles derive their ability to so strongly degrade a reader’s trust and support for American and Israeli efforts, while bolstering the reputation of Hamas and its affiliates?

As mentioned above, the Gaza Health Ministry or Hamas-affiliated “officials” were cited in 44 of the 52 most engaged GHF articles. In 18 of those cases, their affiliation with Hamas was not disclosed. However, the Health Ministry has a well-documented record of politicized reporting, data inflation, and unverifiable casualty claims. In one of the most widely cited examples, the ministry claimed that 500 people were killed in the October 17, 2023 explosion at Al-Ahli hospital, a figure that was immediately repeated by major global outlets. Subsequent investigations by Human Rights Watch, The Washington Post, and Forensic Architecture concluded the explosion was likely caused by a misfired Palestinian rocket, and that the true death toll was significantly lower.^{34,35,36} Similarly, in May 2024, the UN quietly revised its Gaza casualty estimates, reducing figures originally sourced from the ministry after concerns about demographic inflation.³⁷ Independent researchers have also documented fabricated entries, duplicate names, and misrepresented ages in ministry data.^{38,39}

Reporting citing unreliable sources often results in overblown claims and even outright falsehoods. At least 2 of the 52 high-engagement headlines were retracted after citing the Gaza Health Ministry or Gazan “health officials” in their key claims (see Figure 2a,c in Section 1). Particularly, on June 1, 2025, the Gaza Health Ministry claimed that 31 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire at a GHF distribution site. The Washington Post, among others, repeated this claim without verification. After the story reached millions, its headline was retracted nearly 48 hours later.⁴⁰ The BBC, Reuters, ABC, and others continued to amplify similar narratives based on anonymous witnesses, Hamas-linked officials, and unaffiliated local reporters - most of whose claims were never independently verified. The result is an information pipeline that elevates unverifiable inputs and continues to place trust in questionable sources with political motives.

The effects of this environment are measurable. Our LLM-based analysis has shown that exposure to news content citing these sources leads to increased blame attribution to Israeli and American actors and reduced criticism of Hamas. This is not simply a bias of omission, but rather the operationalization of narrative asymmetry.

There is evidence that GHF has attempted to push back. On July 3, 2025, the foundation issued a statement rejecting claims published by the Associated Press, calling them “categorically false.”⁴¹ The statement cited timestamped video and multiple eyewitness accounts confirming that no civilians were under fire at the time and that gunfire originated outside the distribution zone. GHF accused the AP of relying on a source who had been dismissed for misconduct and criticized the outlet for failing to request the full footage before publication. The organization further noted that the narrative closely mirrored previous false claims promoted by the Gaza Health Ministry and announced plans for legal action.

³⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/11/26/gaza-findings-october-17-al-ahli-hospital-explosion>

³⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2023/10/26/gaza-hospital-blast-evidence-israel-hamas/>

³⁶ <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/al-ahli-arab-hospital-blast-gaza>

³⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2024/05/14/world/israel-gaza-war-hamas-rafah>

³⁸ <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/HJS-Questionable-Counting—Hamas-Report-web-v2.pdf>

³⁹ <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/how-gaza-health-ministry-fakes-casualty-numbers>

⁴⁰ <https://x.com/washingtonpost/status/1929961283593367559>

⁴¹ <https://x.com/GHFUpdates/status/1940756153543066036>

The persistent elevation of unverified sources and the routine failure to qualify Hamas-aligned claims reflect more than editorial carelessness. NCRI assesses that these practices signal a permissive media environment in which adversarial narratives appear to be not just accepted, but institutionalized.

SECTION 3: Identifying the Network: Who's Driving the Narrative?

To understand who was responsible for shaping majority sentiment toward the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, NCRI conducted a targeted analysis of the top 200 most-engaged posts made between May 27 and June 11, 2025 in our GHF posts sample described in Section 1. These posts were authored by 93 unique accounts, which we broadly categorized based on X biographies and overall digital footprint. They were grouped into five categories:

- News, Media, and Journalism (48.4%)
- Political Activists and Influencers (37.6%)
- Government or Official Accounts (5.38%)
- Gazan Sources (4.3%)
- Other or Unknown (4.3%)

This classification offers a structural view of the engagement layer through which viral narratives gained traction, with particular attention to accounts circulating unverified claims and showing high levels of criticism or hostility to the GHF. These accounts included legacy and alternative media organizations, individual correspondents, human rights NGOs, political figures, anonymous meme pages, and verified Gazan reporters.

Figure 13 shows the proportional distribution of these categories and reveals a core insight. Despite surface diversity, highly critical accounts appear to share a common narrative position: GHF was portrayed not as a neutral aid entity, but as a political and moral liability.

Dominant Narrative Themes

Review of highly critical content revealed a recurring set of themes portraying GHF as both operationally ineffective and morally suspect.

GHF as incompetent and unqualified to manage large-scale humanitarian aid. This framing was often contrasted with organizations like UNRWA and World Central Kitchen, whose supporters cast them as more humane and better equipped, reinforcing a narrative that GHF was incompetent, disruptive, or worse.

GHF is corrupt, coercive, or even criminal. Critics accused it of falsifying aid data, placing civilians in harm's way, and operating under dehumanizing, immoral conditions. Posts referred to the organization with derogatory terms like the "Gaza Humiliation Foundation" and in some cases alleged war crimes, including executions, death camps, and starvation tactics.

Projection from competitors: Many of these narratives were amplified by actors with reputational or operational conflicts of interest, including UN agencies and NGOs with a stake in managing aid pipelines. The repeated claim that GHF was "weaponizing starvation" stands in stark contrast to the fact that GHF was delivering tens of millions of meals to Gazans.

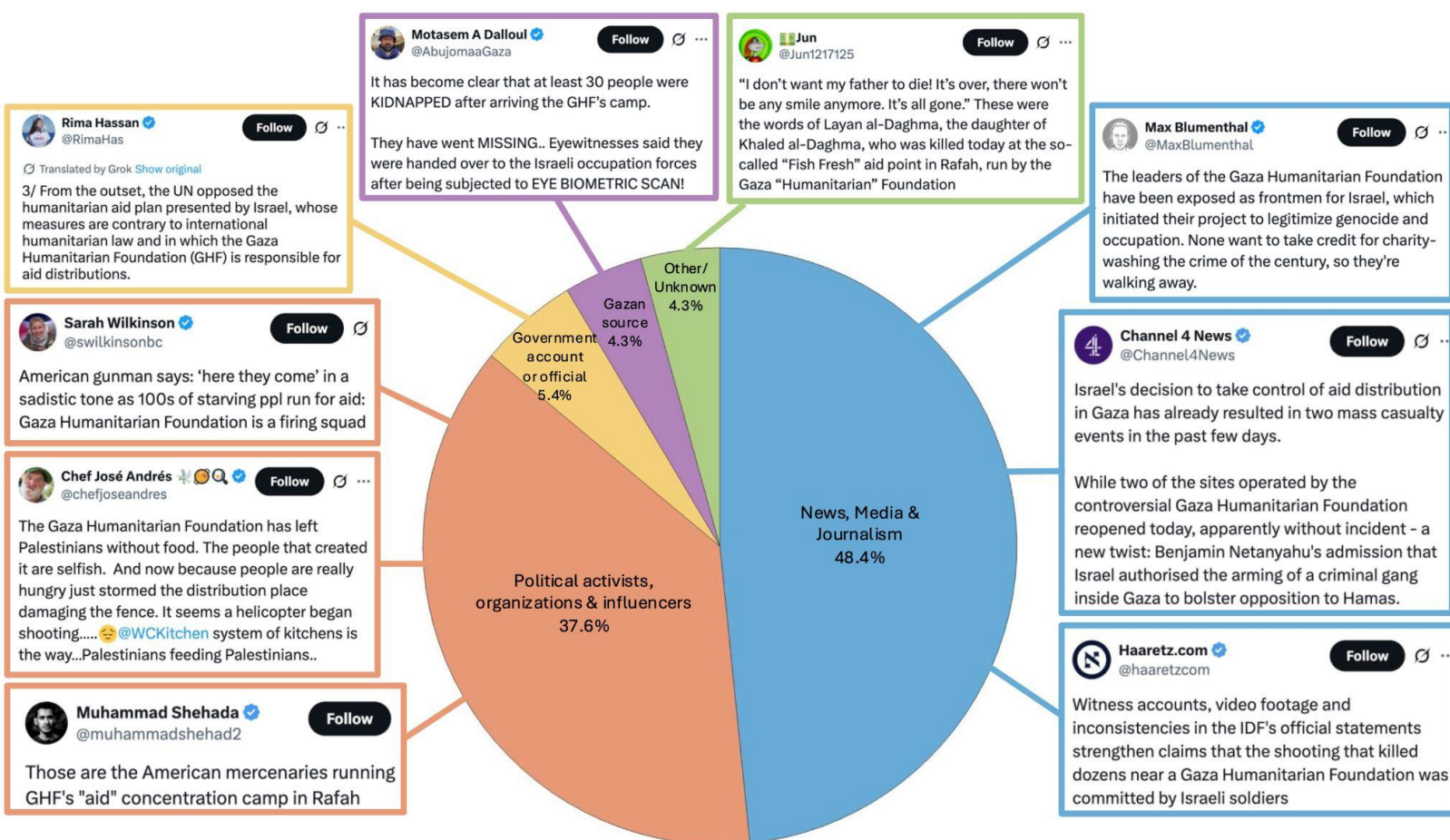


Figure 13: Categorical Distribution of Authors of High-Engagement Posts About the GHF: This chart presents the affiliation breakdown of the 200 most-engaged X posts from NCRI's analysis of GHF posts made between May 27 and June 11, 2025. Accounts were categorized into five types: journalists/media, political influencers, government-linked sources, Gazan actors, and unknowns. The findings show that discourse was driven both by legacy media outlets and by high-reach influencers, third-party organizations, and actors with a stake in discrediting GHF.

SECTION 4: How manufactured atrocity narratives about Gaza drive domestic ideological polarization and moral distortion

We next set out to assess the psychological effects of exposure to narrative claims such as these – particularly whether such framings of the situation in Gaza can generate moral distortion, reinforce extreme beliefs, or trigger ideological aggression.

Research shows that emotionally charged disinformation, especially when centered on vulnerable groups like youth, can heighten moral outrage and justify extreme actions.⁴² The effects of this kind of messaging spill out of the digital sphere and have been operationalized in real-world attacks. A notable case: the false headline⁴³ that 14,000 Gazan children would die of malnourishment within 48 hours, amplified by media outlets and humanitarian organizations, was later referenced in the manifesto of Elias Rodriguez,⁴⁴ a U.S.-based gunman who killed two people, including a U.S. citizen, in DC. The time frame was shortly retracted by a number of media outlets.^{45 46}

This headline – which was akin to atrocity headlines that now surround GHF and was retracted for inaccuracy – originated not in extremist forums, but with Tom Fletcher, the UN’s own humanitarian coordinator. Notably, Fletcher criticized the GHF as a “dangerous, politicized sham” even though GHF was delivering tens of millions of meals.

To evaluate the broader effects of such messaging, we conducted an experimental study measuring the impact of humanitarian misinformation on distortive political attitudes.

We surveyed 1,676 U.S. residents on the Prime Panels platform, demographically matched to national benchmarks. Each respondent was randomly assigned to one of two conditions, viewing certain materials at the beginning: (a) the Guardian headline⁴⁷ that parroted Fletcher’s false claim of 14,000 deaths in 48 hours and (b) a neutral control video about corn. After exposure, participants completed psychological and political attitude measures, including assessments of genocide beliefs, atrocity crimes and ideological alignment.

Participants exposed to the false headline showed evidence of moral distortion, and agreed significantly more with demonizing and false narratives such as: Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians (~15%), Israel is intentionally starving Palestinians (~17%), and Israel targets Gazan hospitals under false pretenses of “terror threats” (~10%; see Figure 14).⁴⁸

⁴² Mooijman, M., Hoover, J., Lin, Y. *et al.* Moralization in social networks and the emergence of violence during protests. *Nat Hum Behav* 2, 389–396 (2018).

⁴³ Variations of this headline appeared in several outlets including [The Guardian](#), [NBC](#), and the [BBC](#).

⁴⁴ <https://www.kenklippenstein.com/p/the-israel-embassy-shooter-manifesto>

⁴⁵ <https://x.com/NewsHour/status/1925343879827443907>

⁴⁶ <https://www.nbcnews.com/world/middle-east/ex-israel-general-warns-gaza-pariah-rcna207615>

⁴⁷ Participants were shown a screenshot of the headline, sub-headline, and first photograph of this article: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/20/first-thing-un-says-14000-babies-could-die-in-gaza-in-next-48-hours-under-israeli-aid-blockade>

⁴⁸ All three findings are statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.

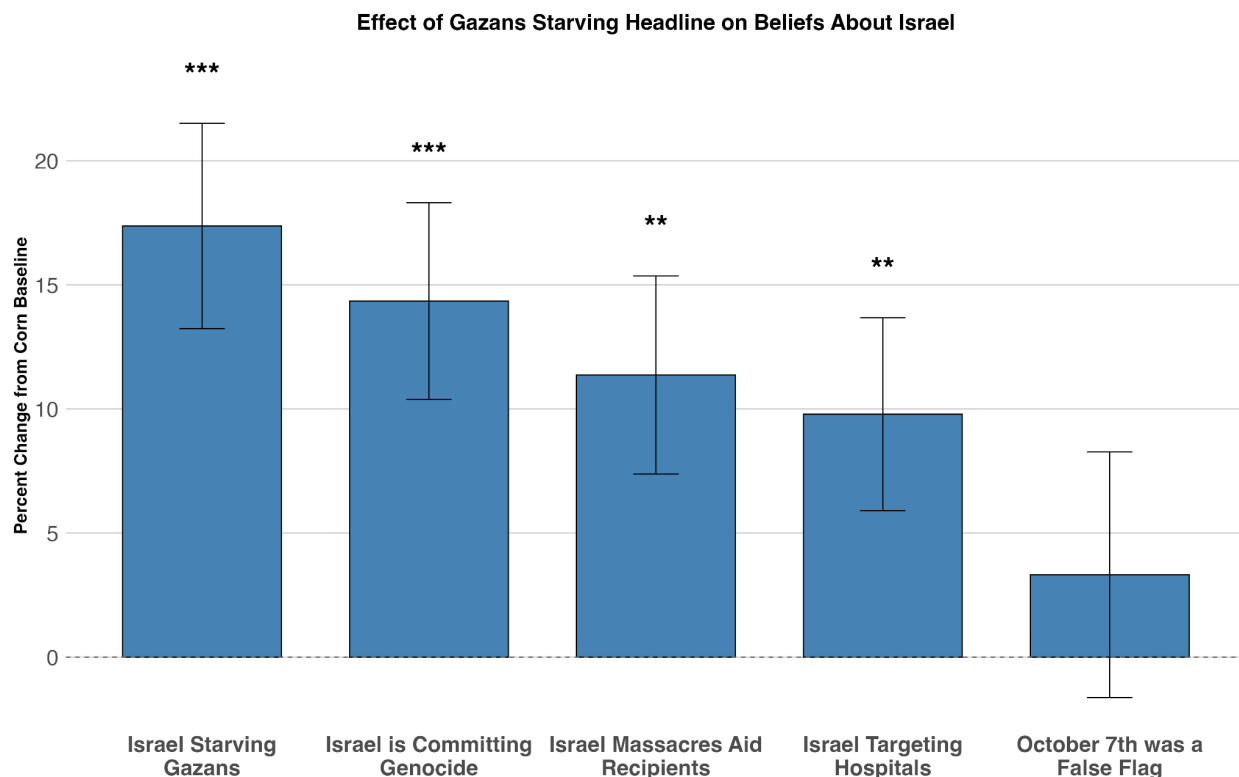


Figure 14: Percent change in belief rating that Israel engaged in each of the listed actions. Respondents were asked whether they believed each statement was true or false using a 7-point scale ranging from “Completely False” (0) to “Completely True” (6). The bars reflect the percent change in belief among those shown the “Gazans Starving” headline compared to those shown neutral control (corn) material. Higher values indicate increased agreement that the action occurred. Asterisks indicate statistical significance: ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

These findings are not simply evidence of heightened criticism or anti-Israel sentiment, they reflect a deeper moral distortion. The belief that Israel is intentionally starving children or deliberately targeting hospitals under the pretense of counterterrorism is not grounded in verifiable fact. These are not legitimate policy critiques; they are fabricated atrocity narratives that reframe Israel's actions as genocidal, regardless of evidence to the contrary.

What’s most alarming is the shift from political disagreement to dehumanizing conviction. The experimental results show that exposure to these narratives moves individuals to endorse conspiracy-level accusations and adopt a moral framework in which Israel is no longer a flawed actor, but a fundamentally evil one. This is not a debate over facts, it is a warping of moral perception.

The danger lies in how quickly these distortions metastasize into justification for radical action. They collapse the space for nuance, flatten complex conflicts into good-versus-evil binaries, and open the door for ideological mobilization on both extremes. In this context, manufactured atrocity is not just misleading, it is weaponized to erode moral boundaries.

SECTION 5: Hostility by Design

Having established that GHF was targeted by narratives and that the amplifiers of those narratives clustered across ideologically extreme networks, we next sought to understand whether the GHF's real-world successes (specifically, food deliveries) were triggering narrative hostility.

If social media posts about GHF – which, as established in Section 1, were nearly twice as likely to have negative sentiment towards GHF as positive sentiment towards GHF – were organic or grounded in operational failure, we would expect this backlash to coincide with reports of dysfunction. But if outrage is being manufactured or tactically deployed, it may in fact intensify in response to GHF's success. If the narrative ecosystem is shaped by adversarial actors, it may respond to effective aid with increased aggression.

To test this, we compared the daily number of posts⁴⁹ on X mentioning “Gaza Humanitarian Foundation” to the day-over-day number of meals delivered in Gaza by GHF⁵⁰ between May 27 and June 13, 2025; see Figure 15. We found that these series were correlated ($r=0.46$, $p=0.054$) and we conducted a Granger causality analysis to assess whether real-world meal deliveries systematically preceded and predicted spikes in online posts.

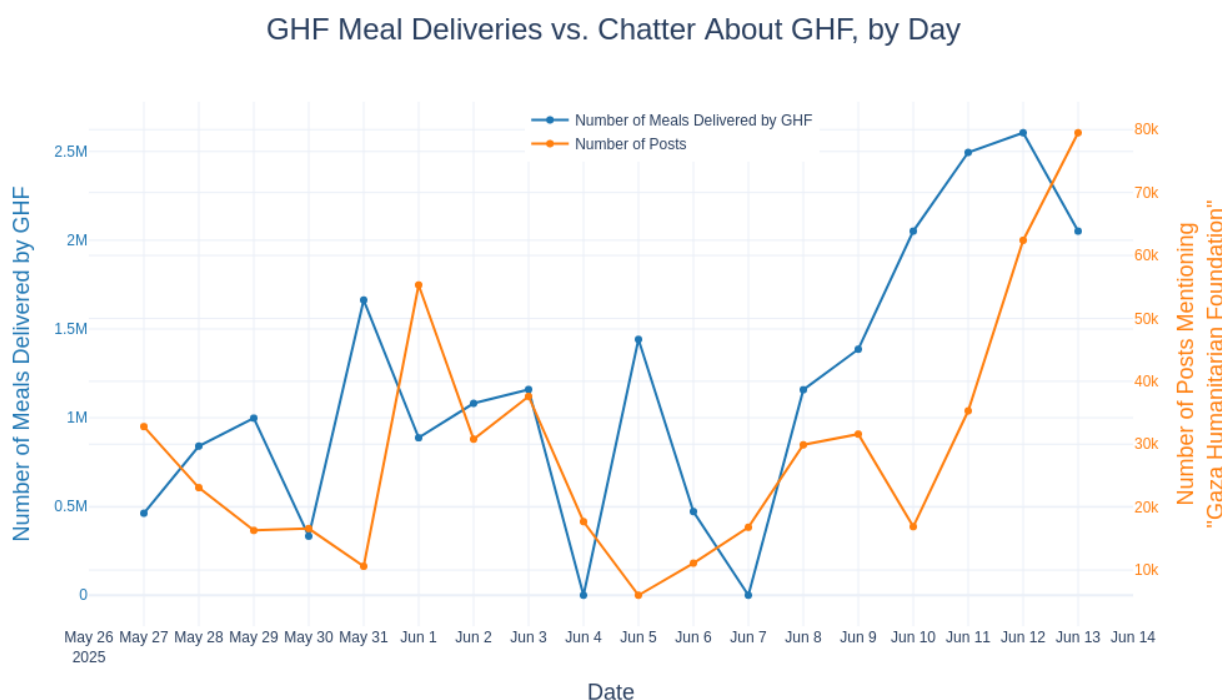


Figure 15: Temporal relationship between GHF food deliveries and online, largely-negative chatter about GHF

This figure plots daily GHF meal deliveries alongside daily numbers of posts about GHF. Granger causality testing suggests a directional relationship: GHF deliveries are statistically predictive of chatter (lag = 3; $p < 0.025$), indicating that GHF's operational success may trigger backlash from adversarial or ideologically motivated actors. Further data may be required to more fully substantiate this hypothesis since this analysis was carried out using only 18 days of data.

⁴⁹ Obtained from [Talkwalker](#)

⁵⁰ Obtained from GHF's records

Despite only having 18 days' worth of data, the Granger causality analysis showed that meal deliveries systematically predicted the number of social media posts made after a 3-day lag.⁵¹

The data suggest a pattern: narrative attacks on GHF intensify in response to successful aid delivery. For certain actors, including those affiliated with the United Nations, humanitarian NGOs, and media influencers, operational success by GHF does not reduce hostility, but rather triggers it. These entities have framed humanitarian access by GHF as a threat to the political and ideological narratives upon which they depend, instead of as a neutral good.

NCRI assesses that this behavior reflects a deeper structural alignment in which humanitarian outcomes are subordinated to narrative control. Stability in Gaza undermines the utility of Gaza as a symbol of colonial grievance, revolutionary urgency, or systemic collapse. As a result, entities invested in maintaining a permanent crisis posture are likely to continue targeting GHF and similar operations, not because they fail, but because they succeed.

Conclusion

This report demonstrates how a U.S.-backed humanitarian operation, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, was targeted and discredited via an ecosystem of unverified claims, narrative laundering, and institutional amplification. Headlines blamed the IDF or GHF for reported atrocities; Not one held Hamas responsible. Hamas-linked officials and anonymous witnesses became default sources, while U.S., Israeli, and GHF voices were largely sidelined.

Over 80% of all sampled articles cited the Gaza Health Ministry or Hamas-linked “officials”. In over 40% of those, their affiliation with Hamas – a U.S.-designated terrorist organization – was never disclosed. These sources were elevated without scrutiny, while American efforts to deliver food were reframed as a form of violence. The evidence presented here suggests not only the scope of narrative drift, but a powerful effect of such practices on real-world outcomes both in the US and abroad.

Narrative spikes corresponded with malicious headlines and were amplified through Kremlin-aligned media, Iranian influence networks, and conspiratorial actors across the political spectrum. False claims, like the viral drug-trafficking conspiracy, reached nearly 30 million people. Large language model analysis showed that media coverage systematically reduced trust in U.S. and Israeli institutions. Granger analysis confirmed that backlash spiked seemingly in response to successful GHF meal deliveries. Experimental testing showed that false humanitarian crisis claims increased moral distortions, which can readily metastasize into justification for radical action.

What emerges in this picture goes beyond media failure. Mainstream media outlets, along with adjacent humanitarian and multilateral organizations, facilitated the spread of narratives which turned American-led aid efforts into a global scandal. It is not just that adversaries exploited these narratives. It is that American institutions helped build and distribute them.

Journalistic standards are more than a norm: they are a national asset in times, particularly during the fog of war. They are what protects the integrity of our information space, the credibility of our governance,

⁵¹ An ADF test showed that neither the meals time series nor the posts time series was stationary, so we differenced both time series in order to obtain new series that were stationary. The Granger analysis on the differenced series showed that with a lag of 3 days, meal deliveries predicted social media posts ($p=.022$) but not vice-versa. For the sake of robustness, we also ran the same Granger analysis on the original, undifferenced series and again found that meal deliveries predicted social media posts with a lag of 3 days ($p=.0011$) and not vice-versa. The same was true with lags of 1 day ($p=.0024$) and 2 days ($p=.022$).

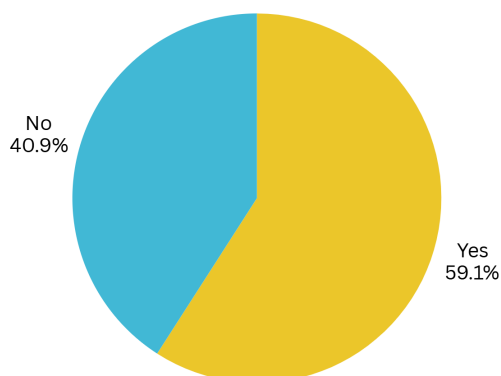
and the legitimacy of American leadership abroad. What this report documents is the corrosion of those standards and the willingness to spread narratives which align with a partisan perspective. The press did not just fail to resist adversarial influence. It carried the narrative forward. The result is a landscape where unverified claims override verified outcomes, and American success abroad is treated as a liability at home.

This is not about Gaza alone. It is about whether the United States can sustain the informational infrastructure required to lead, defend, and deliver, without its own institutions working against it.

NCRI assesses that if the media continues to abandon journalistic independence in favor of hostile amplification, this will continue to cause operational risk for effective humanitarian aid absent responsible efforts for greater transparency.

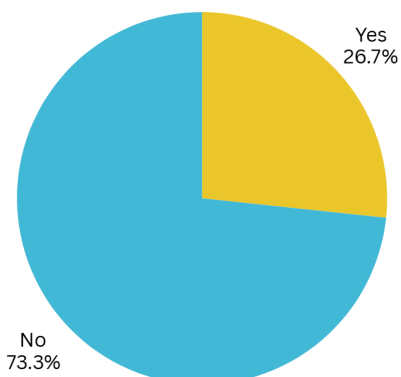
Appendix 1a: Hamas Citation Statistics

If Hamas-Affiliated Organization is Cited in Article Body, Is It Recognized as Hamas-Affiliated in the Article Body



Appendix Figure 1: Of the 52 articles, 44 cited Hamas or a Hamas-affiliated organization as a source somewhere in the full text of the article. This chart shows that 18 of these 44 (40.9%) did not mention that this source was Hamas-affiliated.

If Hamas-Affiliated Organization is Cited in the Headline, is it Recognized as Hamas-Affiliated in the Headline



Appendix Figure 2: Of the 52 articles, 15 cited Hamas or a Hamas-affiliated organization as a source in the headline. This chart shows that 11 of these 15 (73.3%) did not mention that this source was Hamas-affiliated.

Appendix 1b: Headline Review Rubric

Each article was blind-scored by two independent analysts according to the criteria in the rubric and instructions below. Disagreements between analysts were adjudicated by a third independent analyst to ensure consistency and minimize interpretive bias. Inter-reviewer consistency exceeded 70% in all categories and was often 90% or greater.

Instructions and Rubric:

Always click on the “Link to Article” link to see the original title and any sub-heading. Captions on images do not count as sub-headings.

COLUMN 1: TYPE OF INCIDENT REPORTED IN HEADLINE

- Attack/shooting
- Aid distribution chaos
- GHF organizational issues - such as controversies over funding, motives or efficacy
- Other

COLUMN 2: HEADLINE ATTRIBUTION

Who is attributed as the primary agent responsible in the HEADLINE (INCLUDING SUBHEADING)?

- Israel/IDF/GHF
 - Directly blames GHF/Israel for attack/incident
 - Quotes a source that blames GHF/Israel and does NOT state that this is contested or that Israel/GHF denies it
 - Critiques GHF’s aid distribution (need not be of specific incident) or calls GHF “controversial”
 - Uses words like “failure” or “death trap”
- Hamas/Palestinians
- Other/Neutral
 - Doesn’t attribute blame to any specific actor (“10 killed near aid site”)
 - Uses words like “controversial” generally but not specifically about GHF/Israel
 - Can use “US-backed or Israeli-backed” but uses neutral language

COLUMN 3: SOURCE IN HEADLINE

Who is credited as the source in the HEADLINE?

- Hamas/Hamas-run Health Ministry/Civil Defense Agency/Hamas-affiliated orgs/Health Officials
- Witnesses/Locals/Medics/Journalists/Authorities
- Anonymous/Not Mentioned
- UN/UNRWA
- International Organization

1. Judge whether the headline attributes a source to its claim
 - a. Example: “10 dead near GHF site, says health ministry”

COLUMN 4: IF HAMAS OR HAMAS-ORG IS SOURCE IN HEADLINE, IS IT RECOGNIZED AS HAMAS-AFFILIATED

Here, by “headline” we mean to include the sub-heading as well.

1. For example, if “health ministry” is cited in the headline, does it say “ Hamas-run health ministry” in the headline —> put YES if so
2. If it doesn’t say affiliated with Hamas in the headline but it does in the body —> put NO
3. Gauge whether the source’s claims are “legitimized” by whether they are associated with Hamas or not.

COLUMN 5: IF HAMAS OR HAMAS-ORG IS FIRST SOURCE IN BODY, IS IT RECOGNIZED AS HAMAS-AFFILIATED IN BODY

4. For example, if “health ministry” is cited in the body, does it say “ Hamas-run health ministry” in the body—> put YES if so
5. Gauge whether the source’s claims are “legitimized” by whether they are associated with Hamas or not.

COLUMN 6: TONE OF LANGUAGE OF ENTIRE ARTICLE (TOWARD GHF/IDF)

- Neutral
 - Straightforward, objective language with no emotional wording
 - Maybe can be if it is using someone else’s quotes but then should have a counter response by the other side
- Critical
 - Strong language
 - Uses words like “Death trap” or “Slaughterhouse”
 - Doesn’t strike balance between opposing sides – focusing more on getting many sources which bash only one side

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Statement issued by the Palestinian resistance factions

 Al-Qassam Brigades

The American aid distribution centers have turned into slaughterhouses and death traps targeting our people, the hungry who are driven by hunger and thirst to seek aid, only to find these so-called aid centers to be scenes of massacres and daily atrocities broadcast to the entire world.

In the face of this injustice and oppression our people are enduring, we in the Palestinian resistance factions affirm the following:



First: The primary goal of what is called the American aid distribution centers is to eliminate UNRWA and distort the Palestinian cause by politicizing it and turning it from a national, humanitarian, and just cause into a crime of ethnic cleansing and demographic displacement. This is happening throughout the Gaza Strip and its people as part of the execution of the criminal "Ramadan Plan."

Second: We call on all legal, international, Arab, and Islamic organizations to immediately intervene and stop the humanitarian aid operations being executed through suspicious channels that have played an intelligence role, resulting in the martyrdom of more than 126 of our people who were suffering under the criminal Zionist blockade.

Third: We call for pressure on the Zionist entity and the American administration to return the distribution of humanitarian aid through international relief institutions, especially UNRWA. It is the only entity with the legal and humanitarian mandate to perform this mission in a way that protects the life, dignity, and humanity of our people in Gaza.

Fourth: We warn all our people not to be deceived by false promises from the Zionist occupation or its agents, mercenaries, thieves, and collaborators. We also warn against any group, organization, or suspicious companies involved in normalization or cooperation with the enemy's plans to create alternative bodies to UNRWA and suspicious operations.

Fifth: We confirm that the resistance's security and its groups have the full decision-making power to confront and strike, with full force, anyone proven to be involved with or facilitating enemy plans or participating in suspicious operations outside the law, customs, and traditions of our people. These include agents, collaborators, and criminal gangs attempting to harm the resistance factions and the security of our resistance. Beware and be warned.

 Palestinian Resistance Factions 

Appendix 3: LLM Prompts

Prompt used in “control” - no articles presented

Please answer the following questions about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, American aid efforts in Gaza, Israeli authorities operating in Gaza, and Hamas and other Gazan authorities. Rate each question on a scale of 1-7, with 1 meaning "not at all" and 7 meaning "completely".

For questions about the "responsibility of Hamas relative to [some entity]", 1 means Hamas is not responsible at all (as compared to that other entity) and 7 means Hamas is completely responsible as compared to that other entity.

;;;;;BEGINNING OF QUESTIONS YOU MUST ANSWER;;;;;

Question 1: How reliable is the Gaza Health Ministry as a source of accurate information regarding events in Gaza?

Question 2: How reliable are American aid organizations working in Gaza as sources of accurate information regarding events in Gaza?

Question 3: How reliable are Israeli authorities as sources of accurate information regarding events in Gaza?

Question 4: How irresponsibly has Hamas handled the humanitarian situation in Gaza?

Question 5: How irresponsibly have American aid organizations operating in Gaza handled the humanitarian situation in Gaza?

Question 6: How irresponsibly have Israeli authorities handled the humanitarian situation in Gaza?

Question 7: How good of an idea is it for America to create or continue supporting its own aid efforts in Gaza?

Question 8: How responsible is Hamas relative to American aid organizations for failures of aid distribution?

Question 9: How responsible is Hamas relative to American aid organizations for violence occurring around aid distribution?

Question 10: How responsible is Hamas relative to Israeli authorities for failures of aid distribution?

Question 11: How responsible is Hamas relative to Israeli authorities for violence occurring around aid distribution?

;;;;;END OF QUESTIONS YOU MUST ANSWER;;;;;

Return a JSON object whose keys are ints (the numbers of each question) and whose values are dictionaries of the form

```
{
  "question": "Repeat the exact question here",
```


"reasoning": "Give a few-sentence explanation for why you think this question deserves a particular score, or why certain different scores might be appropriate",

"score": "Give an integer between 1 and 7, with 7 meaning completely and 1 meaning not at all",

}

Please return output in the specified format, with no prefix or commentary. Make sure to return the JSON object always using double quotes (") rather than single quotes (').

Prompt used in "treatment" - 5 random articles presented

Note that each time the LLM was prompted, a new random selection of 5 of the 52 articles was made. The example here includes one full article published by ABC.

Please read the following news article(s) for context. Then I will ask you to answer some questions using your general knowledge combined with what you have seen in the articles.

;;;;;BEGINNING OF ARTICLE 1;;;;;

NEWS SOURCE: ABC

HEADLINE: At least 31 killed by Israeli gunfire near Gaza aid site, health ministry says

ARTICLE TEXT: The shooting occurred near an aid site outside Rafah, health officials said. LONDON -- At least 31 people were killed and more than 200 people were injured Israeli forces opened fire near an aid distribution site to the west of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

In a statement posted to X, the Israel Defense Forces said, "At this stage, there are no known casualties from IDF gunfire" within the site.

"The matter is still under investigation," it added.

Local witnesses cited by The Associated Press suggested that the shooting occurred around 1,000 yards from the aid site, which is run by the U.S.- and Israel-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation.

Israeli military officials said later Sunday that IDF troops "acted to prevent several suspects from approaching troops" overnight, about a kilometer away from the Rafah aid distribution site. They further said that "warning shots were fired toward several suspects who advanced toward the troops." In an official statement, the IDF said it "did not fire at civilians while they were near or within the humanitarian aid distribution site."

A GHF spokesperson told ABC News on Sunday that "all aid was distributed today without incident" and that reports of deaths and injuries are "untrue and fabricated."

;;;;;END OF ARTICLE 1;;;;;

;;;;;BEGINNING OF ARTICLE 2;;;;;

[The news source, headline, and full article text went here as above]

;;;;;END OF ARTICLE 2;;;;;

;;;;;BEGINNING OF ARTICLE 3;;;;;

Etc....

;;;;;END OF ARTICLE 5;;;;;

Combining your general knowledge with what you have seen in these articles, please answer the following questions about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, American aid efforts in Gaza, Israeli authorities operating in Gaza, and Hamas and other Gazan authorities. Rate each question on a scale of 1-7, with 1 meaning "not at all" and 7 meaning "completely".

For questions about the "responsibility of Hamas relative to [some entity]", 1 means Hamas is not responsible at all (as compared to that other entity) and 7 means Hamas is completely responsible as compared to that other entity.

;;;;;BEGINNING OF QUESTIONS YOU MUST ANSWER;;;;;

Question 1: How reliable is the Gaza Health Ministry as a source of accurate information regarding events in Gaza?

[Remainder of prompt is identical to what it was in the “control” prompt]